



Does Word Origin Matter?: Demystifying the Three Layers of Language,

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Definitions of Morphological Awareness:

- According to Joanne Carlisle (1995, p. 194)
 - Morphological awareness refers to an individuals' **"conscious awareness of the morphemic structure of words and their ability to reflect on and manipulate that structure."**
- According to Michael Kieffer and Nonie Lesaux (2010, p. 47)
 - **"Morphology is the system of word structure by which word parts (i.e., roots, suffixes, prefixes) can be combined to create new words."**
- According to Ken Apel (2013, p. 42)
 - **"Morphological awareness refers to the ability to consider and manipulate consciously the smallest units of meaning in language."**

Benefit of Instruction in Morphological Awareness:

- According to Ken Apel (2013, p. 44)
 - **"When students successfully apply such a morphological analysis to an unknown word, word-level understanding occurs and, because of reduced demands at the word level, text-level comprehension is facilitated."**
- According to Kieffer and Lessaux (2007, p. 134)
 - **"When it comes to teaching vocabulary, a little knowledge of root words, prefixes, and suffixes goes a long way."**
 - **"Our recent study with urban fourth- and fifth-graders in California suggests that breaking down words into meaningful parts is important for both Spanish-speaking ELLs and their native English-speaking classmates."**

Does Morphology Relate to Comprehension?

- According to Michael Kieffer and Nonie Lesaux (2007, pg. 138)
 - **"Students' understanding of morphology was a better predictor of reading comprehension than their vocabulary level."**

Vocabulary Instruction Includes Several Components

As discussed in Michael Graves' book, *The Vocabulary Book*, comprehensive vocabulary instruction includes 4 components:

- Engaging in wide reading
- Teaching individual words
- **Teaching word learning strategies**
- Fostering word consciousness

Teaching students to use the morphological parts to figure out the meaning of an unknown word helps students learn vocabulary from context while they are engaging in wide reading. Students cannot learn enough vocabulary just from the words explicitly taught.



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Characteristics of Layers of Language (Excellent reference: *Unlocking Literacy*, by Marcia Henry)

Anglo-Saxon

- 10 – 20% of English words that we use about 65% of the time in our speaking and writing
- Short, common, everyday words
- Originate from a Germanic base
- Most are single syllable
- Spelling is often irregular
- Contains silent letters, vowel teams, consonant blends, digraphs, r- and l- controlled vowels, etc.
- Compound words with defined structure

Latin

- 50 - 55% of all English words
- Most often polysyllabic
- Meanings of Latin roots are often abstract
- Often found in literature or social studies
- Many roots are closed syllables
- Does not use “k’ or “ck”
- Use of “ct” or “pt” as final blends

Greek

- 11% of English words
- Technical, specialized words, especially related to science and math
- Begin to appear in textbooks around 3rd grade.
- Greek morphemes combine or compound
- Have no strict structure
- Often use ch=/k/, ph=/f/ and y=both short and long i sound.

Steps in a Lesson:

- Day 1: Uncover the Meaning
- Day 2: Deepening the Meaning
- Day 3: Word Multiplier
- Day 4: Demonstrate Meaning

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